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United Nations Volunteers

United Nations Volunteers
UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021

Summary

The UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, builds on the previous framework for 2014-2017. The first strategic framework since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it seeks to leverage the power of volunteerism and volunteers as a means of: (a) implementation; and (b) people engagement for attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the strategic framework focuses on two main outcomes and on institutional effectiveness:

1. Outcome 1: The efforts of Member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda are supported through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement;
2. Outcome 2: The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN Volunteers and the integration of volunteerism; and
3. Institutional effectiveness: making UNV fit for purpose.

The UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, is guided by 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/129 on integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond. It consists of a narrative that outlines UNV strategic intent and offer to partners, and a results matrix that articulates specific, measurable outcomes, outputs and indicators.

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021.

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I. Strategic setting: UNV and the 2030 Agenda

1. The international community is implementing the ambitious development plan embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1] This has set clear direction for UNV – together with General Assembly resolution 70/129 on integrating volunteerism into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond[2] and resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.[3] Member States' strategic guidance underscores the need for inclusive, context-tailored and nationally owned approaches to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce exclusion, address inequalities and enable a life of dignity for all.

2. Widespread poverty and rising inequalities can disrupt the path to sustainable development. Global issues, such as the impact of climate change and violent extremism, create multiple vulnerabilities, even in countries once considered stable. Recent mass migration and displacements have demonstrated the importance of global interdependence. The 2030 Agenda offers Member States, the private sector, civil society, academia and the United Nations system a historic opportunity to marshal their individual and collective resources to localize the Sustainable Development Goals, to engage people in finding and implementing solutions, and to address inequalities, including issues of gender. The 2030 Agenda will have to be meaningful at both the local and national levels where people can experience positive change and transformation. This centrality of people in the agenda makes volunteerism and UNV more relevant than ever.

3. Volunteerism galvanises all types of people, including those who have not traditionally benefitted from or been given the opportunity to contribute to peace and development. Ultimately, volunteering is an expression of civic engagement and individuals' involvement in their communities (be it local, national or international). Well-supported and facilitated volunteerism, integrated into national practices and policies, gives people and communities the opportunity to directly engage and have an impact in achieving the Goals.[4]

4. UNV, through the placement of volunteers within the United Nations system and the promotion of volunteerism, will: (a) contribute to raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda in remote areas and with marginalized populations; (b) enable the monitoring of the Goals through citizen-driven qualitative and quantitative data collection; (c) provide technical expertise to encourage conducive policy environments and opportunities for people to volunteer; (d) help improve the delivery of services; and (e) model behaviours to inspire others. UNV also contributes to United Nations peace and humanitarian efforts, as illustrated in the 2,500 UN-Volunteers deployed each year of the 2015-2016 biennium in peacekeeping and special political missions in 17 countries.[5]

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[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", 25 September 2015, available at: https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1.

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/129, "Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond", 17 December 2015, available at: https://undocs.org/A/Res/70/129.

[3] General Assembly resolution 71/243, "Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", 21 December 2016, available at: https://undocs.org/a/Res/71/243.

[4] General Assembly resolution 63/153, "Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers", 11 February 2009, available at: https://undocs.org/a/Res/63/153. For example, DP/FPA/2017/9, UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021, available at: http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/DP.FPA_2017.9_-_UNFPA_strategic_plan_2018-2021_-_FINAL_-_25July2017_-_corrected_24Aug17.pdf.

[5] The term "UN-Volunteers" refers to the individual volunteers deployed by UNV.

5. As a shared platform and common service for the United Nation system, UNV must further enhance its impact by strengthening and diversifying its international, national and online UN-Volunteer modalities and by providing volunteer advisory services. To this end, UNV has collaborated with UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in their respective strategic planning processes, enabling their collective commitment stated in the common chapter of their strategic plans to "build on recent progress in engaging citizens through volunteerism, empowerment, participation and other means to strengthen national ownership and capacity, and delivery of the sustainable development agenda."[6]

II. Lessons learned

6. The external independent evaluation of the first UNV Strategic Framework, 2014-2017, stated that the framework was instrumental in giving UNV clear strategic focus and in positioning it as a relevant actor in integrating volunteerism as an effective means of implementation.

7. The implementation of UNV thematic global programmes for 2014-2017 – which include access to basic social services; community resilience for environment and disaster risk reduction; peacebuilding; youth; and national capacity development through volunteer schemes – started late, primarily owing to UNV capacity constraints. According to the evaluation, only national capacity development through volunteer schemes (volunteer infrastructure) emerged as an area of strong comparative advantage for UNV. As a result, rather than pursuing separate global programmes, it was recommended that UNV leverage its technical expertise and focus programmatic work on national capacity development through volunteer schemes (volunteer infrastructure) in the new strategic framework. This will enable stronger development outcomes in all relevant thematic areas, corresponding to the 2030 Agenda and national development priorities.

8. The intended Strategic Framework, 2014-2017, annual mobilization target of 10,000 UN-Volunteers was not met. While the number of UN-Volunteers mobilized between 2014 and 2017 remained stable, at approximately 6,000 per year, the proportion of national to international UN-Volunteers during the same period grew from 28 to 40 per cent.[7] UNV needs to revamp its traditional business model of mobilizing primarily international UN-Volunteers (historically between 70 and 80 per cent of overall numbers), redouble its focus on United Nations partners, and diversify its partners to maintain relevance in the fast-changing peace, development and humanitarian contexts. United Nations system partnership diversification for UNV within the last Strategic Framework, 2014-2017, was stymied by internal operational impediments. UNV should make it easier to work with new partners within the United Nations system.

9. Recognizing that strengthening and consolidating UNV regional and country-level presence has been a step in the right direction, the independent evaluation recommended greater devolution of responsibilities to the regional and country level. UNV launched a transformation process in 2017 that aims to address impediments and ensure the organization can effectively deliver on the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021.

[6] For example, DP/FPA/2017/9, UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, available at: http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/DP.FPA_2017.9_-_UNFPA_strategic_plan_2018-2021_-_FINAL_-_25July2017_-_corrected_24Aug17.pdf.

[7] The term "national UN-Volunteers" refers to volunteers mobilized within their own countries; "international UN-Volunteers" refers to volunteers mobilized across borders.

III. Development vision and outcomes

10. UNV envisions a world where volunteerism is recognized and integrated as a means of engaging people in sustainable peace and development, thereby helping societies to become more cohesive and stable.

A. Outcome 1. The efforts of Member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda are supported through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement

11. UNV will offer substantive expertise on volunteerism and volunteer infrastructures as a vehicle for capacity development across the 2030 Agenda and to support Member States in their effort to attain national development outcomes and reach the Goals. These include the following.

12. *Supporting Member States in developing programmes, policies and legislation that promote volunteerism and volunteer action through advisory services.* This action includes: (a) scoping and assessments of national volunteer contexts focused on policies and legislation, volunteer schemes, technological context, funding mechanisms and knowledge generation; (b) co-creating online and onsite institutional arrangements to support volunteering and increase participation from different groups, especially engaging women and young people, to achieve national development outcomes; (c) facilitating national capacity development to manage large-scale volunteer schemes supported with training manuals, toolkits and standards for management of volunteers; (d) providing guidance, methodologies for monitoring and evaluating the contribution and impact of volunteerism and volunteers to national and local development efforts including cost-benefit analysis of funded schemes; and (e) supporting the measurement of the scale and scope of volunteering through tools and technical support to implement the International Labour Organization (ILO) manual on the measurement of volunteer work.[8]

13. *Enhancing understanding of volunteerism and its value through knowledge exchanges on volunteerism for sustainable development.* This action includes: (a) developing a body of evidence on volunteerism through cutting edge research that addresses knowledge gaps in, one, (1.1) policy and legislation (including practices that support volunteerism as an inclusive means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda), two, (1.2) schemes and organizations at the national and subnational levels, and three, (1.3) data on the contribution of volunteer activities to development outcomes; (b) producing the State of the World's Volunteerism Report; (c) providing support to evidence exchange, particularly South-South exchange, ensuring diverse experiences are reflected in global research, evidence and measurement instruments; and (d) supporting intergovernmental dialogue on volunteerism through existing mechanisms, such as the voluntary national review process, the regular report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on volunteering, the 2019 regional consultations and the 2020 Global Technical Meeting on Volunteerism.

B. Outcome 2. The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN-Volunteers and the integration of volunteerism

14. In order to help the United Nations system and its various parts to address their different thematic needs under the 2030 Agenda and the quadrennial review, UNV will focus on the following core services to enhance United Nations development, peace and humanitarian impact by strongly focusing on existing United Nations system partnerships and by diversifying and scaling up new partnerships. These include the following.

[8] The ILO manual on the measurement of volunteer work, available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_100574.pdf.

15. *Expanding the opportunities for people to contribute as volunteers to the United Nations development, peace and humanitarian efforts* by: (a) responding rapidly and effectively to meet the needs and interests of United Nations partners through the deployment of qualified international, national and online UN-Volunteers, including youth volunteers; (b) enhancing United Nations partners' capacities by packaging and blending volunteer modalities, including, one, (2.1) integration of UNV and volunteerism within the strategic, policy and operational framework agreements of United Nations partners and, two, (2.2) development of specific UN-Volunteer service lines for United Nations partners; and (c) piloting the provision of advisory services to United Nations partners by, one, (3.1) scoping and assessments of the potential contribution of volunteerism within organizational strategies, projects and programmes, two, (3.2) reviewing current volunteering modalities, three, (3.3) establishing schemes and programmes, and four, (3.4) providing capacity development inputs, including manuals, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to enhance volunteerism.

16. *Promoting volunteerism with United Nations partner entities and integrating volunteerism in United Nations development assistance frameworks and relevant programme documents at country level*, with the aim of facilitating opportunities for motivated, well-equipped volunteers to contribute to United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts. In this context, in order to support United Nations partners in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda, UNV will refine and integrate its databases of aspiring onsite and online volunteers who are interested in serving with the United Nations system, and it will develop more specialized, tailored rosters adapted to partners' demands.

IV. Implementation arrangements

Partnerships

17. The 2030 Agenda demands a revitalized global partnership that leverages the resources of all stakeholders to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, UNV will emphasize partnerships with emerging development partners and further promote South-South cooperation, while at the same time it will strengthen its relationship with traditional partners to enhance the volunteer resource base. UNV will also support Member States in their efforts to establish a nurturing environment for volunteerism and volunteer placement, with increasing government funding to support national volunteer infrastructure initiatives. In addition to United Nations system partnerships outlined in the previous section, UNV will seek innovative partnerships with the private sector, civil society, foundations and international financial institutions through targeted, results-oriented engagements. These efforts will include the following.

18. *Strengthening partnerships with Member States*. UNV will expand and diversify its resource base by engaging with a wide range of countries. UNV will specifically strengthen and diversify partnerships for the Special Voluntary Fund to broaden the coalition of partners supporting the UNV mandate and the continuous innovation of volunteer modalities. In addition, in order to address the resource requirements of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, UNV will reach out to traditional and emerging development partners to scale up complementary funding modalities, such as volunteer opportunities sponsored by Member States, trust funds and cost-sharing of national volunteer infrastructure by programme country governments.

19. *Strengthening engagement with volunteer involving organisations, academia and the private sector*. UNV will continue to enhance its close partnerships and engagement with volunteers, involving organizations and academia to promote and continue building an evidence-based case for volunteerism for sustainable

development. As a critical development partner, the private sector will be engaged to support corporate volunteering and other business practices promoting volunteerism, whereas partnerships with foundations and international financial institutions will be sought to facilitate blended financing for innovative volunteer solutions.

20. Investments will be made in the plan of action as a global framework for building stronger alliances at country, regional and international levels. As the secretariat for the plan of action, designated by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/129,[9] UNV will continue to strengthen its role as convener for multi-stakeholder partnerships for volunteerism and the Goals.

Institutional effectiveness

21. To ensure that UNV remains fit for purpose to deliver on its mandate and to accompany the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, UNV will strengthen its systems and institutional effectiveness.

22. *Capacity to deliver.* UNV aims to achieve organizational excellence and an outstanding ability to deliver on its core mandate. Lean, efficient and decentralized organisational structures as well as an empowered, highly skilled, engaged workforce are two key conditions. In addition, as an important asset to the United Nations system administered by UNDP, UNV will both contribute to and leverage UNDP and its widespread country presence as an operational platform. An openness to embrace change and a willingness to work across organizational boundaries are a must for the organization if it wishes to stay relevant and resilient and contribute to achieving the targets of the Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, and the 2030 Agenda.

23. *Operational excellence.* Two key elements fundamental to UNV delivery capabilities include: (a) improvement of operations around the UNV business model by streamlining policies, systems and processes related to volunteer management; and (b) improvement of UNV agility and connectedness through continued digital transformation and operational optimizations, especially where these reduce costs and facilitate inter-agency collaboration. This includes building on recent gains made to digitize UNV volunteer management applications in favour of more efficient volunteer and recruitment management.

24. *Operational infrastructure.* UNV will have a more focused, empowered country presence with up to 60 field units and five regional offices, and it will leverage the presence of other United Nations organizations based on demand and resource availability. In addition, UNV will prioritize operations in least developed and landlocked developing countries, small-island developing states and countries with United Nations peacekeeping missions, with additional considerations given to countries with large volumes of deployed UN-Volunteers. This will be supported by a greater devolution of authority to the country and regional offices, streamlining and simplification of business processes.

[9] General Assembly resolution 70/129, "Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond", 17 December 2015, available at: http://undocs.org/A/Res/70/129.

V. Results matrix

25. The results matrix for the UNV Strategic Framework, 2018-2021, sets out the results and measures that allow UNV and stakeholders to monitor achievements, learn lessons and hold the organization accountable.

Outcome 1. The efforts of Member States are supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through volunteerism as an effective means of implementation and people engagement.				
Outcome indicators			**Baseline** (2016, unless noted)	**Target** (2021)
Percentage of countries reporting the positive contribution of volunteerism to the Sustainable Development Goals in voluntary national reports on progress towards the Goals.			39% (2017)	50%
Percentage of volunteers mobilized in regional/national volunteer schemes supported by UNV.			125,000 (2016-2017)	170,000
Outputs *(*UNV provides specific support for the following results*)*	**Output indicators** *(*output indicators measure only those results from schemes, services, plans, actions that are specifically *supported* by UNV*)*		**Baseline** (2016, unless noted)	**Target** (2021)
Output 1.1. Member States are supported in developing programmes, policies and legislation that promote volunteerism and volunteer action.	**1.1.1**	Number of volunteer schemes (online, onsite, regional, national, subregional, youth, etc.) supported by UNV.	17 onsite, 2 online	25 onsite, 7 online
	1.1.2	Number of Member States partnering with UNV to integrate social inclusion and gender equity in their policies on volunteerism.	0	5
Output 1.2. Promotion of volunteerism and its value is advanced through engagement of Member States, civil society and academia in research, public dialogue, documentation and dissemination.	**1.2.1**	Number of Member States contributing research and knowledge products to the plan of action.	1	20
	1.2.2	Number of plan of action partners engaged in technical meetings and consultations at global and national levels disaggregated by governments, civil society, private sector, academia	8	25

Outcome 2. The United Nations system is supported to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through the engagement of UN-Volunteers and integration of volunteerism.				
Outcome indicators			**Baseline** (2016, unless noted)	**Target** (2021)
Percentage of United Nations partners reporting the positive contribution of UN-Volunteers (online and onsite) to their mandate.			92% onsite, (2017) 90% online	95%
Percentage of United Nations partners and United Nations partner country offices engaging UN-Volunteers (online and onsite cumulative).			38 partners, 654 country offices	40 partners, 686 country offices
Outputs *(UNV provides specific support for the following results)*	**Output indicators** *(output indicators measure only those results from schemes, services, plans, actions etc. which are specifically supported by UNV)*		**Baseline** (2016, unless noted)	**Target** (2021)
Output 2.1. Expand the opportunities for more people to contribute to United Nations development, peace and humanitarian efforts.	**2.1.1**	Number of months volunteered per year (online and onsite), disaggregated by the Goals.	54,554 onsite, 2,099 online	61,200 onsite, 2,667 online
	2.1.2	Number of people volunteered per year through UNV (online and onsite), disaggregated by gender, age, North/South, country of origin.	6,590 onsite, 12,592 online	7,500 onsite, 16,000 online
	2.1.3	Number of requests from United Nations partners for volunteer advisory services provided by UNV.	0	To be determined
Output 2.2. Motivated, well-equipped volunteers mobilized to contribute to United Nations peace, humanitarian and development efforts.	**2.2.1**	Percentage of UN-Volunteers (online and onsite) reporting that their assignment enhanced their personal and professional development, disaggregated by gender.	94% onsite, 94% online	95%
	2.2.2	Percentage of UN-Volunteers (online and onsite) satisfied with their volunteering experience.	91% onsite, 92% online	95%
Institutional effectiveness: UNV is fit-for-purpose				
Results statement	**No.**	**Indicators**	**Baseline** (2016, unless noted)	**Target** (2021)
1. Culture and capacity to deliver.	**1.**	Percentage of staff engagement.	79%	85%
	2.	Number of business days for national and international UN-Volunteer deployment	35 (national) 65 (international)	21 (national) 55 (international)

2. Leveraging partnerships to deliver.	**3.**	Cumulative quadrennial other resources mobilized (*in United States dollars*).	$50 million (2014-2017)	$60 million (2018-2021)
3. Operational excellence.	**4.**	Management efficiency ratio (percentage, average during the strategic framework period).	9.75%	8%